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How Gnosis Met Logos: The Story of a Hermeneutical Verse in Indian Buddhism

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Abstract

The paper follows the story of a Buddhist hermeneutical principle stressing the primacy of higher cognition (*jñāna*) over ordinary consciousness (*viññāna*) in determining the truth. The principle was first enunciated in the *Catuḥpratisaraṇasūtra*, a famous stanza which sets forth flexible criteria for the interpretation of the Buddhist teachings. After a discussion of the *Catuḥpratisaraṇasūtra* verse, I briefly look into how *jñāna* was understood in the Pali Canon and Abhidharma literature. I also point out the existence of passages in early Buddhist sources and scholastic treatises revealing that at least some communities regarded contemplatives, presumably having access to the higher cognition, as trustworthy interpreters of abstruse meditative states.

The Yogācāra tradition opened a new page in the understanding of the *viññāna-jñāna* relation by connecting it to the triadic model of wisdom, i.e. wisdom derived from listening (*śrutamayī prajñā*), from reflection (*cintāmayī prajñā*), and from meditative cultivation (*bhāvanāmayī prajñā*). I translate and analyse passages from the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* and *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* as well as the *Akṣayamatīrdeśasūtra* and *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. The new developments in the Yogācāra tradition allowed the principle of *jñāna-over-viññāna* primacy to become welded into the yogic path.

In a third stage, the principle influenced the logico-epistemological discussions of yogic perception (*yogipratyakṣa*) and yogic cognition

(*yogijñāna*). To understand this, I translate and examine relevant passages from the works of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. Drawing upon the Yogācārin model, Dharmakīrti explains that the contemplative must first grasp the objects through cognition born of listening, ascertain them through reflection based on reasoning (*yukti*), and finally cognise them through meditative cultivation. This leads to valid perception (*pramāṇam pratyakṣam*).

The paper also tackles the formation of the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra*. According to my hypothetical scenario, the text was compiled in Northern India, around the 1st century CE, in Sautrāntika/(pre-Vijñānavāda) *yogācārin* circles and later gained popularity in both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna. Finally, I briefly discuss the order and wording differences of the verse in various sources, focusing on the *Mahāvvyutpatti* version.

Once upon a Post-Canonical Time

[1] Rely not upon the person (*pudgala*) but on the Teaching (*dharma*).¹

¹ Skt. *dharma* is used here in the sense of '[Buddhist] Teaching' as well as the '[supreme] truth' it leads to. This semantic sphere is already ascertainable in the Pali Canon. For instance, the *Mahāparinibbānasuttanta* says: *Sīlaṃ samādhi paññā ca, vimutti ca anuttarā* | *Anubuddhā ime dhammā, gotamena yasassinā* || *Iti buddho abhiññāya, dhammamakkhāsi bhikkhunam* | *Dukkassantakaro satthā, cakkhumā parinibbuto ti* || (DN II 123.77–12). Here morality (*sīla*), meditation (*samādhi*), wisdom (*paññā*), and supreme liberation (*vimutti anuttarā*) are referred to as *dhammā* realised (*anubuddhā*) by Gotama. And it is this *dhamma*, thoroughly cognised (*abhiññāya*) by the Buddha, which He teaches to the mendicants. See also the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta* citation below. Cf. Buddhaghosa's famous gloss of *dhamma* at *Sumaṅgalavilāsini* [= DN Commentary] I 99.77–13.

The *Akṣayamatīnirdeśasūtra* (Braarvig ed. vol. I, p. 114; pp. 118–119; tr. vol. II, p. 440; pp. 452–546), of which we shall speak more below, has *dharma* instead of *dharma*. Though not exactly the same concepts, it is worth mentioning the gist of

[2] Rely not upon the letter (*vyāñjana*) [of the scriptures] but on [their] meaning (*artha*).²

the *Akṣayamatīnirdeśasūtra* gloss. 'Person' (Tib. *gang zag*; Skt. **pudgala*) is, according to the text, a conventional term (*kun rdzob kyi tshig*; **saṃvṛtipada*), no matter whether it is used for ordinary persons or the Buddha himself. The reason the Tathāgata uses it is to guide sentient beings to the ultimate truth which is no other than the 'nature of phenomena' (*chos nyid*; **dharmatā*), qualified as being the same everywhere (*thams cad mnyam pa*; **sarvatra samatā*), beyond any mental construction (*rtog pa med pa*; **akalpanatā*), etc. (Braarvig ed. vol. I, pp. 118–119; tr. vol. II, pp. 452–545).

(Here and below, in citing or referring to Braarvig's outstanding opus, I follow his punctuation of the Tibetan text but use traditional single and double *shad* instead of commas and full stops. More often than not, the Sanskrit reconstructions also follows Braarvig. The transliteration of the Tibetan script has, however, been changed to Wylie.)

² In a strict grammatical sense, *vyāñjana* refers to a 'consonant'. Literally, it means 'becoming manifest'. This alludes to the nature of the consonant which is incapable of standing alone and manifests itself phonetically when pronounced together with a vowel (see Abhyankar and Shukla 1986, 373, s.v., citing *Mahābhāṣya* ad *Aṣṭādhyāyī* I.2.30; etc.).

Here, however, the word is used in a more general sense of 'letter' contrasted to the '[ultimate] meaning' or 'spirit' of the Teaching. The *Akṣayamatīnirdeśasūtra* glosses the two terms as follows: 'The letter teaches the basics of [lit. entry into] the mundane factors (**laukikadharmā*) and their working (**kriyā*). The meaning[, on the other hand,][leads to] the understanding of the supramundane factors' (**lokottaradharmā*) (*tshig 'bru zhes bya ba ni gang 'jig rten pa'i chos dang bya ba la 'jug pa bstan pa'o || don ces bya ba ni gang 'jig rten las 'das pa'i chos rtogs pa'o ||* Braarvig ed. vol. I, pp. 114; tr. vol II, pp. 440)(This is only one of the many glosses offered by the *Akṣayamatīnirdeśasūtra* on the two terms.)

The primacy of the meaning over the letter is a common theme in Mahāyāna literature. The *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (196), for example, criticises ignorant ordinary people (*bālāpṛthagjana*) for mistaking the literal meaning (*yathārūtārthāniveśa*) for the supreme meaning (*paramārtha*) just like fools wrongly take the finger for the object it points at. A similar simile is found in the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* 大智度論 (T 25.125b).

[3] Rely not upon [the provisional scriptures whose] meaning is to be interpreted (*neyārtha*) but on [those conveying] the definitive meaning (*nītārtha*).³

[4] Rely not upon the [ordinary] consciousness (*viññāna*) but on the [higher] cognition (*jñāna*).⁴

declares the *Catuḥpratisaraṇasūtra* or *Scripture on the Four Bases*. This pithy formula came to be regarded as the locus classicus of Buddhist hermeneutics. The *sūtra*, most probably a late Northern post-canonical text,⁵ does not elaborate upon the nuts and bolts of the guidelines, but it clearly espouses an ideal of flexible interpretation over the reification of meaning and entrusting hermeneutical authority to a single person or

³ The distinction between scriptures or teachings whose meaning is explicit (Pali, *nītattha*), needing no further spelling out, and those whose meaning is implicit and require interpretation (Pali, *neyyatha*) is already found in the Pali Canon (AN I 60.11–15). Although it continued to have some currency in the Theravāda tradition (e.g. *Manorathapūraṇī* II 118), the dichotomy became a major hermeneutical strategy in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The *Akṣayamatīrdeśasūtra* is again bodhisattvically generous with its glosses. To give only one example: ‘The scriptures which are taught to cause aversion to the cycle of rebirths (**samsāra*) are called [scriptures with] implicit meaning. The scriptures which are taught to cause entry into the non-duality of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are called [scriptures of] explicit meaning.’ (*mḍo sḍe gang dag ’khor ba la yid byung bar bya ba bstan pa | de dag ni drang ba’i don ces bya’o || mḍo sḍe gang dag ’khor ba dang mya ngan las ’das pa gnyis su med pa la ’jug par bstan pa | de dag ni nges pa’i don ces bya’o ||* Braarvig ed. vol. I, pp. 117; tr. vol II, p. 450).

This particular verse as well as glosses from the *Akṣayamatīrdeśasūtra* are cited in the *Prasannapadā* (see note 23 below).

⁴ Sanskrit original according to AKVy 704.21–22 (ad AKBh 465.16–17): *dharmāḥ pratisaraṇaṃ na pudgalaḥ. arthaḥ pratisaraṇaṃ na vyanjanaṃ. nītārthaṃ sūtraṃ pratisaraṇaṃ na neyārthaṃ. jñānaṃ pratisaraṇaṃ na viññānaṃ*. For more sources and details, see note 23 below.

The meanings of *viññāna* and *jñāna* will be examined in the following pages.

⁵ On the formation and historical background of the text, see Addendum (A).

community. The ideal seems to have been part and parcel of the Buddhist tradition since the earliest days. The Buddha himself tailored his sermons and instructions to the needs and level of each particular interlocutor rather than aiming at an abstract exposition of general truths.⁶

Flexibility of interpretation did not, however, amount to unlimited hermeneutical freedom. Most, if not all, Buddhist schools developed more or less detailed blueprints necessary to control interpretative abuse and creative exuberance which could easily lead to the dismantling of the entire Dharma edifice. Here we shall trace how the last verse in the stanza above, i.e. the priority of the higher cognition (*jñāna*) over ordinary consciousness (*viññāna*), came to be fleshed out into a set of yogic practices and was eventually incorporated into the principles of Buddhist epistemology.

Early Buddhism and Abhidharma

Throughout Buddhist history, cognition (Skt. *jñāna*; Pali, *ñāṇa*), especially when qualified as supramundane (*lokottara*; *lokuttara*) or correct (*samyak*; *sammā*), has been associated with the higher stages of realisation and internalisation of the truth. As such, it describes the essence of the Buddha's awakening. 'The Lord,' says the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta*, 'knows what is to be known, sees what is to be seen, has attained vision (*cakkhubhūto*), higher cognition (*ñāṇabhūto*), the truth (*dharmabhūto*), the sublime state (*brahmabhūto*).'⁷

Jñāna is also an epistemic-cum-soteriologic ideal open to advanced

⁶ Cf. Frauwallner 2010 [1994], 11.

⁷ *Bhagavā jānaṃ jānāti, paṣaṃ paṣati, cakkhubhūto ñāṇabhūto, dharmabhūto, brahmabhūto* (MN I 111). The *Papañcasūdanī* (II 76.23) glosses *ñāṇabhūto* as being used 'with the meaning of making [things] known' (*viditakaraṇatṭhena*), or more freely rendered, 'revealing the truth'. Incidentally, *brahmabhūto* is explained as 'with the meaning of being the best [/excellent]' (*seṭṭhatṭhena*; id. 76.26).

practioners. According to the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (whose original textual core probably dates back to the end of the 4th century and beginning of the 5th century CE), one of the key factors defining a great contemplative (*mahāyogin*) is the realisation of the noble cognition personally experienced (*svapratyātmāryajñānādhigama*).⁸

How did the principle of the *jñāna*-over-*viññāna* primacy function in the spiritual lives of the Buddhist communities and their compilation of scriptures? Our written sources allow only a very fragmentary glimpse, but one thing we know is that in some communities the contemplatives enjoyed a special place. They seem to have been regarded not only as technical experts but also as sources of interpretative authority, especially when it came to abstruse meditative states. In discussing what we would nowadays roughly call ‘altered states of consciousness’, the discursive analytic skills of the ordinary consciousness (*viññāna*) may indeed hit a wall. Some preachers and scholastics were actually willing to admit this and relinquish their hermeneutic prerogatives to professional contemplatives.

A relevant case is provided by the *Jhānasutta*.⁹ The extant Pali scripture seems to reflect a process of textual conflation. It consists of two conflicting parts which suggest different historical layers. The central part stresses that cognitive penetration by means of liberating knowledge

⁸ *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* 80.2. Suzuki tr. 1956, 70, adds ‘to seek for the attainment [...]’ Cf. Śikṣānanda’s 實叉難陀 Chinese translation: 專求自證聖智 (T 16.599c8); Yasui’s Japanese translation (1976, 71) reads: [...] 証得を求める, i.e. ‘seek realisation [/awakening]’.

Skt. *adhigama*, in the sense of ‘spiritual realisation’, is a frequent occurrence in Buddhist literature, typically contrasted to the authentic teachings transmitted by means of words (*āgama*). Though dealing mainly with Mi-pham’s hermeneutics, Kapstein’s (1993 [1988]) remarks on the dichotomy is relevant for the entire Buddhist tradition.

⁹ AN IV 422–426.

(*aññāpaṭivedha*) is possible only in those meditative attainments associated with perceptions (*saññāsamāpatti*).¹⁰ The introductory part, on the other hand, declares that the eradication of cankers (*āsavaṇaṃ khayaṃ*) can be achieved on the basis of any of the meditative states including the attainment of neither perception nor non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*) and the cessation of perception and emotional reactions (*saññāvedayitanirodha*).

The two states are, however, known to lack perceptual content, either partially (the former) or entirely (the latter).¹¹ Faced with the conundrum, the final redactor(s) of the *sutta* seem to have given up any attempt to offer a consistently logical explanation. Instead, they call upon contemplatives to solve the contradiction: 'I say, these two [non-perceptual] states [...] are to be described by meditative monks (*jhāyih' bhikkhūhi*) [...] skilled in attaining them and re-emerging from them.'¹²

Snippets of the hermeneutic esteem enjoyed by meditators are also found in Abhidharma literature. The encyclopaedic Sarvāstivādin-Vaibhāṣika treatise **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論 (compiled around 150 CE) refers to ideas and practices of contemplatives 瑜伽師 (**yogācāra* or **yogācārya*) in no less than 140 passages.¹³

On a number of occasions, the scholastics 毘婆沙師 (**vaibhāṣika*) who compiled/redacted the opus not only mention *yogācāras* but also show great respect for their interpretations. So much so that in settling a

¹⁰ *Iti kho, bhikkhave, yāvatā saññāsamāpatti tāvatā aññāpaṭivedho* (AN IV 426).

¹¹ We owe Schmithausen (1981, 229–230; 224) a brilliant analysis of the text.

¹² The whole passage reads: *Yāni ca kho imāni, bhikkhave, nissāya dve āyatanāni — nevasaññānāsaññāyatanasamāpatti ca saññāvedayitanirodho ca, jhāyih'ete, bhikkhave, bhikkhūhi samāpattikusalehi samāpattivuṭṭhānakusalehi samāpajjitvā vuṭṭhahitvā samakkhātābānī ti vadāmi*. (AN IV 426.10–14; here I read with Bhikkhu Bodhi 2012, 1827–8, n. 1921, following the Sinhalese edition). Cf. Schmithausen 1981, 229–230.

¹³ See Nishi's seminal study (1975) on the subject.

controversy over the lack of essence of phenomena 一切法非我行相 (**sarvadharmanairātmyākāra*), the authors give priority to *yogācārin* testimony over scriptural proof 經證. No matter whether such proof exists or not, they argue, the position which the *vaibhāṣikas* take on this particular subject is to be understood as definitive 決定 (**niyatam*) ‘since the **yogācāras* generate the aspect [in such a manner] at the stage of meditative cultivation 修觀位 (**bhāvanāvasthā*).’¹⁴

*

Abhidharma literature will also bring new semantic clarifications and doctrinal elaborations upon the concept and place of *jñāna* in the overall picture of theory and practice.¹⁵ The topic is too vast and complex to be tackled here. We shall limit ourselves to one example coming from the same **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra*, a source not very far in time and geo-doctrinal framework from the birthplace of the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra* criteria.¹⁶ This is how the Sarvāstivādin-Vaibhāṣika mega-treatise explains the concept:

It is said to be [called] cognition (**jñāna*) on account of two senses. To wit, the sense of direct realisation (**sākṣātkriyā*) and the sense of clear knowledge (**parijñāna*).¹⁷ The sense of direct realisation refers to the

¹⁴ T 27.45a22–24: 謂：瑜伽師 於修觀位 起此行相故。

See Nishi 1975 (mainly pp. 258–262; also 240–243; 245–247; etc.) which discusses more cases of views attributed to *yogācāras* and accepted by the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* authors as valid, even adduced as support for their own interpretations.

¹⁵ For a comprehensive discussion of the theories of knowledge in Sarvāstivāda scholastics, see Dhammajoti’s magnum opus (1997, 241–284). See also note 31 below.

¹⁶ Strictly speaking, the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra* seems to be the product of a Sautrāntika/proto-Vijñānavāda *yogācārin* milieu, but both traditions, even when opposing its doctrines and spirit, gravitated — polemically, as it were — around the Sarvāstivāda community and scholastics.

fact that it is called ‘cognition’ due to directly realising [the four noble truths, i.e. from the truth concerning] suffering (**duḥkha*) to [the truth concerning] the path (**mārga*). The sense of clear knowledge refers to the fact that it is called ‘cognition’ due to clearly knowing one’s own mental continuum (**svasaṃtāna*) as well as the mental continua of others (**paraṃtāna*).¹⁸

¹⁷ Dhammajoti (1997, 247) similarly renders 證知 as ‘realizes’, for which he also suggests **sākṣāt-√kr*. Skt. *sākṣātkriyā* (or other derivations from *sākṣāt-√kr*) indeed seems the most likely reconstruction here though *abhisambodha*, *adhigamya*, *upa-√labh*, etc. (all recorded in Hirakawa 1997, 1096, s.v. as Skt. equivalents for Ch. 證知) are not entirely excluded.

了知 is translated in Dhammajoti 1997, 247, as ‘comprehends’ (without a Skt. equivalent). Literally, Ch. 了知 translates as ‘clear knowledge’ (which I use as such above). The binome renders Skt. terms like *anugama*, *anubodha*, *ava-√budh*, *ā-√jñā*, *pra-√jñā*, *parikṣā*, etc. alongside *parijñāna* (id., 81, s.v.), which I tentatively adopt here. (A more faithful rendering of the Skt. *parijñāna* would be ‘thorough knowledge’, but for lack of certain evidence, I stay with a translation closer to the Ch. meaning.)

Unfortunately, Hirakawa’s Dictionary does not give the original sources from which the Sanskrit lexemes and Chinese equivalents are taken, but we know that in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, for instance, *parijñāna* (BoBh Dutt ed. 36.12) and *pari-√jñā* (BoBh Dutt ed. 28.2) were indeed translated by Xuanzang using precisely the binome 了知 (T 30.490a28, T 30.487b4 and 9, respectively) (for more examples, see Yokoyama and Hirosawa, 1996, 1097, s.v.). Actually, in the latter passage (BoBh Dutt ed. 28.2 = T 30.487b4), clearly [/thoroughly] knowing the cycle of rebirths as it is guarantees roaming in this very cycle of rebirths without being defiled by it (*saṃsāraṃ yathābhūtaṃ parijānato ‘saṃkliṣṭacittasya saṃsārasaṃsrīṭi*) = Ch. 若能如實了知生死，即無染心流轉生死). Although not exactly the same as the thorough knowledge of one’s continuum as well as those of others, it is undeniable that both such cognitive acts are reserved for the awakened beings and the most advanced bodhisattvas.

¹⁸ Ch. 由二義故說名為智。謂：證知義及了知義。證知義者謂：證知苦乃至證知道故名智。了知義者謂：了知自相續，了知他相續故名智。(T 27.547c10-14)

Both cognitive functions, i.e. the (genuine!) realisation of the four noble truths and the knowledge of one's own as well as others' continua, cover an epistemic sphere well above the faculties of the ordinary consciousness. Actually, the cognition of continua is, to use a modern term, a form of extrasensory perception. Traditionally, it is known as the cognition of the minds of others (*paracittajñāna*, *cetaḥpariyāyābhijñā*; 他心智, 他心通) and represents one of the six paranormal faculties (*ṣaḍ abhijñāḥ*; 六神通) attainable only by the Buddhas and the most advanced practioners.¹⁹

It is true that Abhidharma literature also recognises types of cognition qualified as mundane and/or impure. In its chapter dedicated to *jñāna*, the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* lists various forms of mundane (*laukiki*), contaminated (*sāsrava*) intelligence (*prajñā*) which nonetheless fall under the category of cognition.²⁰ There is, however, a far larger number of occurrences in which *jñāna* denotes cognitive processes closely associated to the path towards or the attainment of the Buddhist *summum bonum*.²¹ Awakening (*bodhi*) is actually equated with correct knowledge (*samyag-jñāna*), further spelled out as referring to the cognition of the exhaustion (*kṣayajñāna*) of defilements (*kleśa*) and suffering (*duḥka*) as well as the cognition of their non-arising (*anutpādayajñāna*).²²

¹⁹ The cognition of others' minds (*paracittajñāna*) is also classified as one of the ten cognitions (see AKBh 393). See also note 21 below.

²⁰ See the discussion at AKBh 391. A similar understanding is also found in the Theravāda Abhidhamma. The *Vibhaṅga* speaks of mundane (*lokiyā*) intelligence (*paññā*), contaminated (*sāsrava*) intelligence, etc. (Vibh 308 et passim). These are likewise discussed under the category of cognition (*ñāṇa*) in the similarly titled 'Chapter on the Analysis of Cognition' (*Nāṇavibhaṅga*).

²¹ The paradigmatic set of ten cognitions is a case in point. It is the subject of a detailed analysis in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKBh 391ff.). The **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* 大智度論 (T 25.234a) adds to the list an eleventh category called 'cognition of reality as it is' (如實智 **yathābhūtajñāna*), which is the sole province of the Buddha.

Early Mahāyāna and Yogācāra Literature

The paramount role given to *jñāna* as well as the existence of a tradition favouring the validity of meditation-based testimony must have been key factors in the articulation of the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra* verse. The stanza, partially or in toto, was cited, rephrased, alluded to, and elaborated upon in a variety of Northern Buddhist traditions ranging from Sautrāntika and Sarvāstivādin texts to early Mahāyāna scriptures and Yogācāra as well as Madhyamaka treatises.²³

²² Skt. *yaiva hi pūrvam bodhir uktā saiveha samyagjñānaṃ veditavyam, yaduta kṣayajñānam, anutpādayjñānaṃ ca* (AKBh 388.17). For *kṣayajñāna* and *anutpādayjñāna*, see AKBh 394.

²³ E.g. *Akṣayamatīnirdeśasūtra* (see details below); *Dharmasaṃgraha* Müller and Wenzel ed. 11, § 53 = Skt. and Tib. translation at Gyaltsen Namdol ed. 28–29, § 53; **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadśa* 大智度論 T 25.125a–b (for the French translation, see Lamotte’s masterpiece 1944–1980, vol. I, 536–540); (Mahāyāna) *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* 大般涅槃經 (T 12. 642a21–24); *Bodhisattvabhūmi, Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra, Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (for these three texts, see details below); *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* Lévi ed. 138 (Ch. 18, ver. 31–33) = Nagao ed., vol. 3, 223–227 (which offers an improved edition and excellent Japanese rendering); *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* 704.21–22 (ad *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* 465.16–17; for citation, see note 4 above); Candrakīrti’s *Prasannapadā* La Vallée Poussin ed. 43 = MacDonald ed. vol. I, 208 (the passage is superbly translated and annotated at id. vol. 2, 169–172), citing from the *Akṣayamati[nirdeśa]sūtra* the following line: *na neyārthasūtrāntapratīṣaraṇatā* (with a different wording from the AKVy version quoted above but similar to the *Mahāvīyutpatti*, for which see Addendum (B) below); *Mahāvīyutpatti* § 74, pp. 123–124 (in a different order and wording, for which see Addendum (B) below); Ratnākaraśānti’s **Prajñāpāramitopadeśa* (P vol. 114, Ku 153a5–153b5; followed by long sections on the meaning of *neyārtha* and *nītārtha*; for the Japanese translation, see Umino 2002, 203ff.); etc. The best modern study on the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra* remains Lamotte 1993 [1988] (see also Lamotte 1944–1980, vol. I, p. 536, n. 1). For further parallels, see also the detailed note in La Vallée Poussin 1971, vol. 5, p. 246, n. 2. Cf. Harrison 2003, especially pp. 16ff.

In this section, we shall focus on the developments, theoretical and practical, brought to the *jñāna-over-vijñāna* principle in Yogācāra literature and two other related sources, i.e. the *Akṣayamatīrdeśasūtra* and the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. The latter two are not part of the Yogācāra corpus, but they seem to have either paved the way for or to have been influenced by these developments.

The *Akṣayamatīrdeśasūtra* offers what seems to be the earliest and most detailed gloss of the verse.²⁴ The *sūtra* itself is not a Yogācāra text. It reflects general Mahāyāna ideas and practices typical of the pre-Nāgārjunian period, gravitating more or less in the vicinity of the Prajñāpāramitā philosophy (though not going back to its earliest strata). Research suggests that the *Akṣayamatīrdeśasūtra* was already in existence by the time of Nāgārjuna (ca 150–250).²⁵ All this points to a (very tentative) dating of its formation to a period from the second half of the 1st

²⁴ Only a few fragments of the *Akṣayamatīrdeśasūtra* are extant in Sanskrit. The text survives in its entirety in Tibetan and Chinese translations. The Tibetan translation, together with extant Skt. passages as well as large parts of the *Akṣayamatīrdeśasūtraṭīkā* are brilliantly edited and translated with annotations in Braarvig's magnum opus. For the Tibetan version of the extensive gloss of the verse, see Braarvig ed. vol. I 114–119 (Skt. fragment at 167); tr. vol. II 440–456. The Tib. text, Skt. reconstruction, English tr., *Ṭīkā* fragments, and links to Ch. translations are available online in the impressive *Bibliotheca Polyglotta* project sponsored by the University of Oslo and co-ordinated by Professor Braarvig himself. For the *Akṣayamatīrdeśasūtra*, see: <https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=volume&vid=424>

The order and wording of the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra* verse differ from the above AKVy citation. For details, see below and Addendum (B).

²⁵ This is first stated by Kuno (1933, 41) as being a fact 'proved by scholars' 學者によつて證せられて居る (without giving, however, further details). Nakamura 1989 [1980], 210, citing Kuno's research, makes a similar statement.

As for Nāgārjuna's date, ca 150–250 CE seems to be the most widely supported hypothesis, especially in Japan (see Hirakawa 1979, 32–34; Nakamura 1989 [1980], 235; Seyfort Ruegg 2010, 16; Saitō 2012, 31; etc.).

century to the first half of the 2nd century CE.²⁶

There will be another century or so until the Yogācāra school will begin to take shape. The full-fledged Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda will, however, take the *sūtra* under its wing, so to speak. Not only will it be cited or referred to in a number of Yogācāra sources²⁷ but the most extensive commentary dedicated to text, the *Akṣayamatinirdeśasūtraṭīkā*, is written from a typically Yogācāra-Vijñānavādin standpoint. Traditionally, the work is attributed to Vasubandhu, but it is far more likely that its author is Sthiramati (510–570)²⁸ or some other post-Vasubandhu exegete.

The gloss on our verse in the *Akṣayamatinirdeśasūtra* details the fundamental differences between ordinary consciousness (*viññāna*) and higher cognition (*jñāna*).²⁹ The former, we are told, basically deals with representation, i.e. processing information (*ṇam par rig pa*; **viññapti*) from the five senses and the mind.³⁰ *Jñāna*, on the other hand, is a cognitive mode which does not involve mentally constructing (**kalpanā*) or imagining (**vikalpanā*) any phenomenon (**dharma*), not even if this is done by relying

²⁶ Braarvig 1993 gives an even rougher dating (which, all considering, is probably wiser). According to the Norwegian scholar, the *Akṣayamatinirdeśasūtra* ‘as we know it today achieved a fairly final form during the first two centuries A.D.’ (vol. II, p. XLIX). Braarvig qualifies this as a ‘supposition not too far from the truth’ (id.). In his brief Introduction to the text in *Bibliotheca Polyglotta* (see note 24 above), he calls for a re-examination of the intertextuality relations of the *Akṣayamatinirdeśasūtra* with the *Bodhisattvapīṭaka* and other Mahāyāna *sūtras*, which could indeed help to pinpoint with more precision its date and place in the larger historical context.

²⁷ See Braarvig 1993, vol. II, pp. LII–LIV.

²⁸ As suggested by Braarvig 1993, vol. II, p. CXXXVIII.

²⁹ Braarvig ed. vol. I, 116–7; tr. vol. II, 446–9. I discuss below only three of the six distinctions drawn by the text.

³⁰ Skt. *viññapti* is not used here with Yogācāra-Vijñānavādin connotations. It is rather the general meaning of ‘information, report, address (to a superior), etc. (see Monier-Williams s.v.) which makes it quite suitable for this particular semantic task.

on its own power.³¹

While *viññāna* arises from objects of knowledge (*dmigs pa*; **ālambana*), from applying one's attention (*yid la byes pa*; **manasikāra*) [to meditative objects?],³² or from imagining (*yongs su rtog pa*; **parikalpa*) things, the higher cognition occurs without [1] any grasping ('*dzin pa med pa*; **agrāha*), [2] any clinging (*mchog tu 'dzin pa med pa*; **aparāmarśa*), [3] any perception (*dmigs pa med pa*; **anupalambha*), [4] any representation (*rnam par rig pa med pa*; *aviññapti**),³³ or [5] any mental construction (*rtog pa med pa*; **akalpanā*).³⁴ To sum up,

Furthermore, consciousness (**viññāna*) arises [only] with regard to [/within] conditioned phenomena (**saṃskṛta*). As far as the non-conditioned (**asaṃskṛta*) is regarded, there is no functioning of

³¹ *ye shes la rton pas chos gang la yang mi rtog | rnam par mi rtog pa | 'di ni ye shes shes bya'o ||*

Also note that the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* 大智度論 similarly qualifies the so-called cognition of reality as it is (如實智 **yathābhūtajñāna*), the highest form of *jñāna*, as lacking characteristics (**nimitta*), support (**ālambana*), and differentiation (**prabheda*) (是如實智中無相，無緣，無別。T 25.234a6-7).

³² Given the fact that *manas(i)kāra* is also employed to refer to meditative techniques (e.g. *Śrāvakabhūmi* Yogasthāna IV [Deleanu 2006] et passim), the implication here may be of objects of meditation as another source for the arising of consciousness, different from the regular cognitive objects or those provided by acts of imagination. (Note, however, that *ālambana* is also used to denote objects of meditation.)

³³ Or to stay faithful to the rendering in the preceding passage, 'without any processing of sense- or mind-provided information'.

³⁴ The *Akṣayamatīnirdeśasūtratīkā* (Braarvig 1993, vol. II, p. 448, n. 2) glosses these terms as absence of mentally constructing (*rtog pa med pa*) [1] a Self (*bdag*; **ātman*), [2] what pertains to a Self (*bdag gi*; *ātmiya*), [3] a reified nature (**svabhāva*) in perceiving matter (*gzugs shes gzung ba'i ngo bo*) [, etc.], [4] consciousness and being aware of it (*rnam par shes pa ste*, *de la dmigs par byed pa'o*), and [5] a Self (*bdag*; **ātman*) and phenomena (*chos*; **dharma*).

consciousness. The knowledge with regard to the non-conditioned is the higher cognition (**jñāna*).³⁵

*

The Yogācāra tradition proper opened a new page in the understanding of the *vijñāna-jñāna* relation by connecting it to the triadic model of wisdom, i.e. wisdom derived from listening (*śrutamayī prajñā*; 聞所成慧) to scriptures and teachings, wisdom derived from correct reflection (*cintāmayī prajñā*; 思所成慧) on them, and wisdom derived from meditative cultivation (*bhāvanāmayī prajñā*; 修所成慧) based on them. This is how their role on the spiritual path is explained in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, one of the earliest Yogācāra texts going back to the latter half of the 3rd century CE and later incorporated in the *Yogācārabhūmi*, the mammoth treatise of the school:³⁶

Rather than merely [relying] upon the [ordinary] consciousness (*vijñāna*) [which comprehends] the meaning of the teachings [grasped through] listening (*śruta*) and reflection (*cintā*), the bodhisattva regards cognition [based on direct] realisation (*adhigamajñāne*) as essential. He understands that what is to be known by means of meditative cognition (*bhāvanāmayena jñānena*) cannot be understood merely through the [ordinary] consciousness [born of] listening and reflection (*śrutacintāvijñānamātrakeṇa*). And even (*api*) as he hears the ultimate, profound teachings preached by the Tathāgata, he does not reject or revile them.³⁷

³⁵ *gzhan yang 'dus byas rgyu ba'i chos rnams la rnam par shes pa skye ste | 'dus ma byas la ni rnam par shes pa rgyu ba med do || gang 'dus ma byas su shes pa, de ni ye shes so ||*

³⁶ This as well as the dates below are largely conjectural and controversial. For a discussion on the historical background of the texts mentioned in this section, see Deleanu 2006, 147–247.

The use of the triadic model of cognition/wisdom allows the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* authors to connect *viññāna* to the process of listening and reflecting upon Buddhist teachings. These are important steps on the path of spiritual cultivation but insufficient. The only mental process which can ensure the realisation of the supreme truth (*paramārtha*) is meditative cognition.³⁸

Innovative as it may be, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* does not shed enough light on the different roles played by listening, reflection, and meditation. This will be elucidated in the *Samādhinirmocanasūtra*, the next step (or rather ‘disentangled knot!’) in the history of Yogācāra philosophy. The scripture, most likely compiled in first half of the 4th century CE, contains a passage seemingly indebted to the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* and intertextually related to the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra*:

Maitreya, through wisdom born of listening (**śrutamayī prajñā*), the bodhisattva relies upon words [/letters] (**vyañjana*),³⁹ [which] he takes literally without understanding their [true] intent (**abhiprāya*) [...]. Maitreya, through wisdom born of reflection (**cintāmayī prajñā*),

³⁷ *punar bodhisattvo 'dhigamajñāne sāradaśī bhavati, na śrutacintādharmārtha-viññānamātrake. sa yad bhāvanāmayena jñānena jñātavyaṃ na tac chakyaṃ śrutacintā viññānamātrakeṇa viññātum iti viditvā paramagambhīrān api tathāgatabhāṣitān dharmān śrutvā na pratikṣipati nāpavadatai* (BoBh Dutt ed. 175-6; BoBh Wogihara ed. 257). Xunazang's Chinese translation reads: 又諸菩薩於真證智見為真實，非於聞思，但識法義 非真證智。是諸菩薩 如實了知修所成智所應知者，非唯聞思所成諸識 所能了達。如實知已，聞如來說最極甚深所有法義，終不誹毀 (T 30. 539a). Cf. also Lamotte 1993 [1988], 23.

³⁸ The *Bodhisattvabhūmi* also seems to imply here that no matter how different its doctrines are from the Śrāvakayāna orthodoxy and even other Mahāyāna teachings, the fact that they are based on meditative cognition, i.e. *the* highest criterion of truth, guarantees their authenticity.

³⁹ Tib. *tshig 'bru* literally means ‘word-letter’. Cf. note 2 above.

the bodhisattva [still] relies only upon words but does not take them literally and [comes to] understand their [true] intent [...]. Maitreya, through wisdom born of meditative cultivation (**bhāvanāmayī prajñā*), the bodhisattva may or may not rely upon words, may or may not take them literally, but he understands their [true] intent which becomes manifest through images (**pratibimba*) [perceived in] the sphere of concentration (**samādhi-gocara*), [images which are] identical (**sabhāga*) with the cognitive object (*jñeya*) [itself].⁴⁰

Listening becomes equated to literal understanding. Reflection, on the other hand, though based on linguistic/conceptual modes of comprehension

⁴⁰ *Byams pa byang chub sems dpa' thos pa las byung ba'i shes rab kyi ni tshig 'bru la gnas pa | sgra ji bzhi pa | dgongs pa med pa | [...] so so yang dag par rig par byed do || Byams pa byang chub sems dpa' bsams pa las byung ba'i shes rab kyi ni tshig 'bru la gnas pa kho na yin la* ⁽¹⁾ *| sgra ji bzhi pa ma yin pa | dgongs pa can | [...] so so yang dag par rig par byed do || Byams pa byang chub sems dpa' bsgoms pa las byung ba'i shes rab kyi ni tshig 'bru la gnas pa dang | tshig 'bru la gnas pa ma yin pa dang | sgra ji bzhi pa | [sgra ji bzhi pa ma yin pa]* ⁽²⁾ *| dgongs pa can | shes bya'i dngos po dang cha 'thun pa'i ting nge 'dzin gyi spyod yul gyi bzugs brnyan gyis mngon du gyur pa | [...] so so yang dag par rig par byed do ||* (SNS p. 105, § 24). Xuanzang's 玄奘 Chinese translation of the entire passage reads: 佛告慈氏菩薩曰：“善男子，聞所成慧依止於文，但如其說未善意趣，未現在前隨順解脫，未能領受成解脫義。思所成慧亦依於文，不唯如說能善意趣，未現在前轉順解脫，未能領受成解脫義。若諸菩薩修所成慧，亦依於文，亦不依文，亦如其說，亦不如說，能善意趣所知事同分三摩地所行，影像現前極順解脫，已能領受成解脫義。善男子，是名三種知義差別。” (T 16.700c)

⁽¹⁾ Lamotte (SNS 105): *kho na [ma] yin la* (on basis of Ch.). Both P and D (cf. Powers 1995, 182–3) read without negation. Since the Tibetan text makes sense as it is, I think a hypothetical emendation is not necessary.

⁽²⁾ Hypothetical emendation. I read here with Lamotte (SNS 105) (against both P and D; cf. Powers 1995, 182–3) following Xuanzang's translation which makes a better reading.

My rendering differs in several points from both Lamotte 1935, 223, and Powers 1995, 182–183. Cf. also Lopez 1993 [1988], 7–8.

sion, reveals the true intent of the words. (The true intent (*abhiprāya*) can be more or less regarded as the definitive meaning (*nītārtha*) of the teachings.) Finally, it is meditative cultivation which attains the real cognition of the object itself by means of images, i.e. non-conceptual modes made possible by the contemplative act.

*

A similar pattern of dividing the cognitive labour, so to speak, is echoed in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. The famous treatise, probably composed sometime in the second half of the 4th century CE,⁴¹ sets forth the elaborate system of the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika scholastics from a critical perspective reflecting a largely Sautrāntika outlook spiced with Vasubandhu's unique interpretations. Although its author has been revered as one of the founding patriarchs of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda school, the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* is an essentially Śrāvakayānika opus dating to a period before the Master's conversion to the Great Vehicle.

There are, however, undeniable similarities between the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and the Yogācārin Abhidharma, especially as expounded in the *Yogācārabhūmi*.⁴² No matter how we explain the historical background of these similarities, the fact remains that the two works share a doctrinal intertextuality. Vasubandhu's take on the triadic model of wisdom is actually one of these parallels:⁴³

[It should be] said that [wisdom] born of listening is certain (*niścaya*)
[cognition]⁴⁴ [as it] arises from the valid evidence (*prāmāṇya*) of the

⁴¹ The date rests on my conjectural placing of Vasubandhu to ca 350–430 (for which, see Deleanu 2006, 186–194).

⁴² We owe Robert Kritzer (2005) a meticulous survey and analysis of the parallel passages in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and the *Yogācārabhūmi*.

⁴³ The fragment below is the prose commentary on the verse: *nāmobhayārthaviśayā śrutamayyādikā dhiyaḥ* (AKBh VI ver. 5cd, p. 334).

words of a trustworthy person (*āpta*).⁴⁵ [Wisdom] born of reflection arises from examination [based upon] reasoning (*yukti*).⁴⁶ [And wisdom] born of contemplation arises from meditative concentration (*samādhi*).⁴⁷

Buddhist Logic and Epistemology

Such developments connected to the theory and praxis of the *jñāna*-over-

⁴⁴ Being certain or definitive (*niścita*) is one of the fundamental characteristics of cognition (*jñāna*). The **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra*, for instance, defines *jñāna* as follows: 'Question: why is it called cognition, what is the meaning of cognition? Answer: the meaning of certainty (**niścaya*) is the [very] meaning of cognition.' 問：何故名智，智是何義？答：決定義是智義。(T 27.547b15–16). Cf. Dhammajoti 2009, 247.

⁴⁵ The 'words of a trustworthy/trusted person' (*āptavacana*), which are usually construed as scriptural proof coming from the founder or patriarchs of a school, are recognised as a means of valid cognition in many Indian traditions (e.g. *Nyāyasūtra* I.1.7. (p. 5): *āptopadeśaḥ "śabdah"*). Initially, Buddhism, too, subscribed to this view and treated *āptavacana* as a separate category of proof (e.g. *Śrāvakaḥmūli* ed. 323; tr. 449). Dignāga, however, changed the perspective on scriptural authority not by denying its validity but by including it into the category of inference (*anumāna*) (see Nakamura 1983, 51–52). The term *āptavacana* is usually equated with *āgama* or '[orthodox] transmission [of teachings]' (see, for instance, Dunne 2006, 508, n. 32, referring to Dharmakīti's *Pramāṇavārttikasvopajñavṛtti* 108.1ff.).

⁴⁶ On the complex meaning of *yukti*, see Deleanu 2006, 494–495 (note 74).

⁴⁷ AKBh 335.5–6: *āptavacanaprāmāṇyajātāniścayā śrutamayī, yuktinidhyānājā cintāmayī, samādhijā bhāvanāmayī*. Xuanzang's Chinese translation: 謂：修行者依聞至教 所生勝慧 名聞所成。依思正理 所生勝慧 名思所成。依修等持 所生勝慧 名修所成。(T 29.116b19–20). Paramārtha's 真諦 translation: 依聖言量 所生決定智 名聞慧。依聖教簡擇道理 所生決定智 名思慧。依三摩提所生智 名修慧。(T 29.269a19–21).

We find a rather close parallel of the passage in the *Paryāyasamgrahaṇi* Part of the *Yogācārabhūmi* (see Kritzer 2005, 346–3477). Dunne 2006, 508, also discusses this fragment.

viññāna primacy must have contributed to the genesis of a major theme in the logico-epistemological tradition (*pramāṇavāda*): the yogic perception (*yogipratyakṣa*) and yogic cognition (*yogijñāna*).⁴⁸

Dignāga (ca 430–500?) is the first Buddhist philosopher to examine the concept.⁴⁹ In the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, the Founding Father of the *pramāṇa* tradition classifies *yogipratyakṣa* as one of the four categories of perception.⁵⁰ According to his definition, *yogipratyakṣa* is ‘the contemplatives’ insight (*drk*) into the object itself (*arthamātra*) independent of the Master’s instructions’.⁵¹ This is further glossed as:

The contemplatives’ insight (*darśana*) into the object itself, unmixed

⁴⁸ Numerous studies have been dedicated to *yogipratyakṣa* and *yogijñāna*. Apart from Steinkellner’s seminal paper (1978) and Eltschinger’s excellent study (2009), to which I am particularly indebted, I mention here Dreyfus 1997, 413–414; McDermott 1991; Steinkellner 1999; Woo 2003; Gupta 2006, especially 167–169; and Dunne 2006 (containing also an excellent analysis on how the contemplative can meditate upon universals such as the four noble truths through the medium of yogic perception, which by definition only perceives non-conceptual particulars). For the closely related topic of omniscience (*sarvajñatva*), see Kawasaki’s useful overview (1984; *yogipratyakṣa* is discussed mainly at pp. 309–312).

⁴⁹ These are admittedly unorthodox dates. In Japanese as well as Western Buddhist studies, it is more usual to place Dignāga between ca 480 and 540. I intend to present my hypothesis in a forthcoming paper ‘On the Date of Dignāga’, *Bulletin of the International Institute for Buddhist Studies*, No. 2, 2019).

⁵⁰ The four types of perception are sense perception (*indriyapratyakṣa*), mental perception (*mānasapratyakṣa*), self-cognition (*svasaṃvedanapratyakṣa*; usually translated by Xuanzang as 自證, e.g. T 32.3b21), and contemplative perception (*yogipratyakṣa*). Although Dignāga does not specifically state the number ‘four’ (cf. Franco 1993), he mentions these categories in various contexts of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* and its *vṛtti* (PSV 88 ad § 1 ver. 4 [p. 88]; PSV ad § 1 ver. 6 [pp. 93–94]) (cf. Gupta 2006, 170, n. 1). Dharmakīrti clearly lists up and defines the four types of perceptual cognition (e.g. PV ch. II ver. 192–287).

⁵¹ PS Ch. I, *kārikā* 6cd: *yoginām gurunirdeśavyatibhinnāthamātradrk* ||.

with mental constructions (*vikalpa*) [even if associated with] the transmission [of the Buddhist Teaching] (*āgama*), is also a [type of] perception.⁵²

Though not explicitly stated, the definition presupposes, I believe, the traditional scheme of cognition gained through listening and reflection, both necessary but still based upon discursive thinking (*vikalpa*), vs the non-mediated cognition accessible through meditative cultivation.

As Dharmakīrti (ca 530–600?) will point out, yogic knowledge does not, however, refer to perceptual content yielded in meditative experience.⁵³ In the *Pramāṇavārttika*, the great logician describes *yogijñāna* as follows:

We have discussed above [the topic of] the contemplatives' cognition (*yoginām jñānaṃ*). The [cognition] of these [contemplatives] is born of meditative cultivation (*bhāvanāmaya*), free from the web of mental constructions (*kalpanā*), [and] thus presenting a vivid (*spaṣṭam*) image (*avabhāsa*) [of the object].⁵⁴

⁵² PSV: *yoginām api āgamavikalpavyavakīrnam arthamātradarśanam pratyakṣam*. The Tibetan translation for both the *kārikā* and its gloss is found at Hattori 1968, 180–1. The Sanskrit cited above is based upon Vibhūticandra's notes on Manorathanandin's *Pramāṇavārttikavṛtti* (see Hattori 1968, 94–95). Cf. Xuanzang's translation of the **Nyāyamukha* 因明正理門論本：諸修定者離教分別，皆是現量 (T 32.3b21). Cf. also Eltschinger 2009, 190–191, with further elucidations including the meaning of *arthamātra*.

⁵³ Dharmakīrti is usually dated around 600–660. I find, however, the arguments put forward by Krasser 2012 and supported by Steinkellner 2013, XXIX–XXX, both placing Dharmakīrti's in mid- to latter half of the 6th century, plausible and tentatively suggest the dates above. More will be said in my forthcoming paper 'On the Date of Dignāga' (see note 49 above).

⁵⁴ *prāg uktam yoginām jñānam teṣām tad bhāvanāmayaṃ | vidhūtakalpanājālaṃ spaṣṭam evābhāsaṃ* || (PV II ver. 281bcd; Skt. p. 78 = Tib. p. 79). PVin I ver. 31 (p. 28). For an annotated Japanese translation of the entire passage on *yogipratyakṣa*,

The *Nyāyabindu* further clarifies yogic cognition ‘as born at the culmination of intense meditative cultivation (*bhāvanā*) on real objects of knowledge (*bhūtārtha*)’.⁵⁵ The latter term is glossed by Dharmottara (ca 740–800) as referring to the four noble truths (*catvāry āryasatyāni*).⁵⁶

The insistence on real objects of knowledge is crucial since perceptual vividness alone does not guarantee epistemic validity. Dharmakīrti himself adduces the example of hallucinatory experiences caused by such strong emotions as passion (*kāma*), sorrow (*śoka*), fear (*bhaya*), etc. or extremely vivid dreams. The persons subject to such experiences have exceptionally clear perceptions which are not necessarily conceptual. Their cognitive object, however, is unreal (*abhūta*).⁵⁷

Even some forms of Buddhist meditation include generating mental images which, strictly speaking, are not real. Dharmakīrti is actually aware of the problem mentioning the meditation on impurity (*aśubha*), the earth disc (*prthivīkṛtsna*), etc.⁵⁸ Are these fundamentally different from delusional perceptions?

Though vivid and non-conceptual (as well as presumably useful for spiritual training), even the images produced in such meditative techniques do not meet Dharmakīrti’s criterion of ‘real’ (*bhūta*). In his words, ‘[only] reliable (*saṃvedi*) perception born of meditative cultivation (*bhāvanājāṃ*) is accepted as valid cognition (*prāmāṇam*)’.⁵⁹ As eloquently argued by

see Tosaki 1984, 376–380. According to Devendrabuddhi, on account of meditative cultivation, perception becomes non-conceptual and therefore vivid. There are, however, competing opinions among later exegetes as to the precise order and details of the path (see Tosaki 1984, 377).

⁵⁵ Skt. *bhūtārthabhāvanāprakarṣaṇaparyantaṃ yogijñānaṃ ceti* || (NB I ver. 11; p. 11)

⁵⁶ NBṬ 11.28.

⁵⁷ PV II ver. 282 (Skt. p. 78 = Tib. p. 79); PVin I ver. 29 (pp. 27–28).

⁵⁸ PV II ver. 284 (Skt. p. 78 = Tib. p. 79); PVin 28.7–8.

⁵⁹ The entire PV II ver. 286 (Skt. p. 80 = Tib. p. 81) *kārikā* reads: *tatra prāmāṇam*

Eltshinger (2007, 196), '[t]he condition of a yogic cognition's reliability lies in its bearing on an object that has proved to stand critical analysis by means of *pramāṇas*'. And the only objects standing the test are the four noble truths.⁶⁰

This is how Dharmakīrti summarises the interplay of yogic cognition and other types of valid knowledge in a fragment which echoes the Yogācārin model cited above:

Having grasped the objects through cognition born of listening and ascertained them through reflection based on reasoning (*yukti*) [following valid means (*pramāṇa*) of inference],⁶¹ the contemplatives should also cultivate them meditatively. Having completed the [meditative cultivation], this [cognition], which appears as vividly (*spaṣṭābhāsi*) as in [those cases of hallucinatory] fear, etc., is a valid perception (*pramāṇam pratyakṣam*), which is [both] non-conceptual (*avikalpakam*) [and constitutes something which has proven to be a] real object (*avitathaviṣayaṃ*).⁶²

*

By and large, our story of the *jñāna*-over-*viññāna* principle comes here to an end. What started as a pithy enunciation of a criterion for testing scriptural authenticity became welded to yogic praxis and elaborated upon in the Yogācāra school. In a third and final phase, it was logically refined and

saṃvedi yat prāṇ nirṇītavastutvat | tad bhāvanājām pratyakṣam iṣṭam śeṣā upāplavāḥ ||

⁶⁰ Ibid., on the basis of PVinT; PV II ver. 286b; PV II ver. 281a; PVin 27.11–12; etc.

⁶¹ See Eltshinger 2007, 198, n. 125, citing PVinT.

⁶² *yoginām api śrutamayena jñānenārthān grhītvā yukticitāmayena vyavasthāpya bhāvayatām, tanniṣṭattau yat spaṣṭābhāsi bhayādāv iva, tad avikalpakam avitathaviṣayaṃ pramāṇam pratyakṣam.* (PVin 27.9–11).

became incorporated into a fully articulated epistemological theory by the patriarchs of the Pramāṇa tradition.

The *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra* verse is, after all, an attempt to formulate a logical criterion. In its original form, it is, however, a crude attempt as it fails to provide solid epistemological justification (*begründung*) as well as a praxis map required by the very nature of the verse. It took about half a millennium and generation after generation of contemplatives, exegetes, and philosophers to make it into a genuine logical statement complete with a yogic blueprint.

ADDENDUM (A)

On the Formation and Historical Background of the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra*

As argued by Lamotte in his ‘classic’ study dedicated to the text (1993 [1988]), the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra* does not appear in the early canonical collections. There are precedents on scriptural interpretation (see Lamotte 1993; La Vallée Poussin 1971, vol. 5, p. 246, n. 2), but they do not function as separate textual units. According to Lamotte (1993 [1988], 11–12), ‘[the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra*] first appears in compositions pertaining to the Sarvāstivādin-Vaibhāṣika school’.

While not ruling out entirely the possibility of a Sarvāstivādin-Vaibhāṣika origin, I believe that the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra* is more in tune with an agenda typical of a Sautrāntika/Dārṣṭāntika orientation and/or (pre-Vinjanānavāda) *yogācārin* milieux, both unhappy with the stifling Vaibhāṣika orthodoxy yet not to the point of abandoning the Śrāvakayāna fold altogether.⁶³ We also know that at least some Śrāvakayānika

⁶³ Whether the Sautrāntika and the Dārṣṭāntika represent the same tradition

yogācārins show clear affinities to Sautrāntika and/or Dārṣṭāntika ideas. These *yogācārins* also seemed to have been connected to or open-minded towards exchanges with Mahāyāna communities. At least, this is the historical background suggested by the formation of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (which, as pointed out above, is a key textual witness for the interpretation of the *viññāna-jñāna* relation).⁶⁴

The *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra* breathes with a hermeneutical spirit quite different from the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika establishment. The latter was fully committed to formulating an immutable body of doctrines and a rigid methodology of determining the 'letter' (*vyañjana*) of the scriptures (or at least their fixed meaning) rather than encouraging flexible interpretations straight from the scriptures.⁶⁵

remains a controversial issue. And so is the question as to when the term 'Sautrāntika' began to be used. Volume 26, Number 2 of the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* (2003), especially Kritzer's 'General Introduction', offers a very useful survey of the range of problems and hypotheses surrounding the topic.

My use of 'Sautrāntika/Dārṣṭāntika' is admittedly rather loose. I conceive it as a broad movement not necessarily continuous or homogeneous but generally reflecting flexible (albeit within a Śrāvakayāna paradigm) interpretations derived directly from the scriptures rather than through Vaibhāṣika 'eyeglasses'. There is no doubt that the Dārṣṭāntikas were a group of staunch opponents of the Vaibhāṣikas as their opinions are cited and sternly rebuked in the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra*. In this respect, there is far less certainty about the Sautrāntikas. Indeed I may use the term anachronistically in reference to texts and historical events before the 4th century. Nonetheless, for the sake of convenience, I shall continue to speak of 'Sautrāntika/Dārṣṭāntika' and "Sautrāntika' in the loose sense defined above.

On the role of the Śrāvakayānika *yogācāras/yogācārins* in the formation of the *Yogācārabhūmi* and hence in the genesis of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda school, see Deleanu 2006, 156–162.

⁶⁴ See id., 156–167.

⁶⁵ I wonder whether Lamotte's hypothesis on the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika origin has more to do with his dating of the textual witnesses rather than with the spirit of

The *Catuḥpratisaraṇasūtra* verse also seems to betray a veiled polemical attitude vis-à-vis the criteria of authenticity set forth in the canonical *Mahāpadesasutta* (Skt. *Mahāpadeśasūtra*).⁶⁶ The text recognises four sources or criteria of doctrinal authority (Pali, *cattāro mahāpadesā*; Ch. 四大教法).⁶⁷ A doctrine should be accepted as authentic, the scripture tells us, if it comes from (1) the Buddha himself, (2) the (entire) Saṅgha, (3) a group of elder monks who are learned and have received the transmission of the trustworthy Teaching (*sambahulā therā bhikkhū [...] bahusutā, āgatāgamā*; 衆多比丘持法), or (4) a single elder monk possessed of the same qualities (*eko thero bhikkhu [...] bahusuto, āgatāgamo*; 一比丘持法).⁶⁸ And one more basic condition is attached: even when a doctrine is claimed to come from these sources, it must agree with the established body of *sutta* and *vinaya* texts.

The four criteria are also found in the Sanskrit version of the Śrāvakayānika *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*.⁶⁹ The passage actually starts with a sentence similar to the *Catuḥpratisaraṇasūtra*: (*katham*) *bh(i)kṣuḥ sūtrāntantapratīsarāṇo bhavati na (pudgalapratīsa)raṇaḥ* | (p. 238, § 3) 'How does the monk rely on the scripture rather than on the person?'.⁷⁰

the verse. He actually begins his enumeration of the sources with the *Abhidharma-kośa* (see Lamotte (1993 [1988], 12), which he probably regards as predating other Yogācāra works (but not necessarily other Mahāyāna texts he also refers to, especially the *Akṣayamatīrdeśasūtra*!).

⁶⁶ We also owe Lamotte (1983) an excellent study on these criteria.

⁶⁷ On the meaning of *mahāpadesā*, see Bodhi 2012, 1712, n. 892. Bodhi chooses for his translation 'four great references' (ibid. p. 545). I prefer Walshe's freer rendering of 'criteria' (1987, 255).

⁶⁸ Pali version at AN II 167–170; Ch. version at T 1.17b29–18a22. The passage is also included in the *Mahāparinibbānasuttanta* (DN II 123–126).

⁶⁹ *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* 238–252.

⁷⁰ The statement is absent in the Pali version of the *Mahāparinibbānasuttanta* (DN II 72ff.).

This may actually represent a textual antecedent of the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra* formula. The *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* sentence differs, however, in one respect. It uses *sūtrāntanta*, i.e. accepted textual transmission, instead of *dharma*. The latter arguably has a wider semantic sphere which may lead to more flexibility in interpretation.⁷¹ If *dharma* is conceived of not only as the truth conveyed in the words of scriptures but also the Truth experienced by the practioner, it also makes room for the special role of *jñāna*.

Could the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra* be the product of a Mahāyāna environment? This is another possibility which cannot be ruled out. After all, the stress on teachings over persons (= obtuse *vaibhāṣikas*!), on flexibility in the hermeneutical approach to meaning (therefore, no longer a monopoly of the Mainstream orthodoxy), on definitive texts (and the Great Vehicle was also 'great' in its production of such sources), and on the supremacy of cognition accessible through contemplative experience (*samādhi*) (which becomes ubiquitous in Mahāyāna literature) — all are well-known trademarks of the Great Vehicle movement. Furthermore, as pointed out above, the four criteria are cited or alluded at in at least as many Mahāyāna texts as in Śrāvakayāna ones. Last but not least, as far as we can infer the dates, the earliest text citing and copiously commenting on the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra* is the *Akṣayamatīnirdeśasūtra*, an undoubtedly Mahāyāna source.

Nonetheless, I favour (albeit cautiously and open-mindedly — in the spirit of our verse!) the hypothesis of Sautrāntika/(pre-Vijñānavāda) *yogācārin* origins. In spite of the mutual influences (often going unacknowledged) between the two Vehicles, Śrāvakayāna has been, on the whole, far more conservative and resistant to borrowing from Mahāyāna. It seems — to me, at least — more likely that a set of criteria born in

⁷¹ See note 1 above.

Sautrāntika/(pre-Vijñānavāda) *yogācārin* circles was picked up by Mahāyāna Buddhists rather than the other way around.

Furthermore, there is one point which makes me rather sceptical as to Mahāyāna origins of the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra*. Its earliest citation in the *Akṣayamatinirdeśasūtra* reveals an important textual divergence. While the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* citation (see note 4 above) reads: *dharmah pratisaraṇaṃ na pudgalaḥ*, the *Akṣayamatinirdeśasūtra* has: Tib. *chos nyid la rton gyi gang zag mi rton pa'o* (Skt. **dharmatāpratisaraṇatā na pudgalaḥpratisaraṇatā*) (Braarvig ed. vol. I, p. 114 and 118; tr. vol. II, p. 440 and 452).

No matter what the precise wording and syntax the rest of the original sentence had, there is little doubt that Tib. *chos nyid* presupposes Skt. *dharmatā* or ‘the nature of phenomena’, a fundamental Mahāyāna concept (although the word as such appears in the Pali Canon). It seems rather improbable that the earliest version of the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra* contained *dharmatā*, which was then changed by the Sarvāstivādins and Sautrāntikas to *dharma*. My hypothetical scenario is that the earliest version of the stanza had *sūtrāntanta* (as witnessed in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*), then this was replaced with *dharma* by Sautrāntikas/(pre-Vijñānavāda) *yogācārins*, and finally it was rewritten in (at least some communities of) Mahāyāna as *dharmatā*. Admittedly, however, the lack of a Śrāvakayāna text earlier than the *Akṣayamatinirdeśasūtra* (text which would corroborate the second link) is a flaw in my scenario.

In the end, we are left with conjectural scenarios, and a choice — which, as often is the case, becomes largely in-formed by one’s preferences and imagination — must be made. Mine is that the *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra* was born in Northern India, probably in the 1st century CE,⁷² in Sautrāntika/

⁷² I surmise this on the basis of my hypothetical dating of the *Akṣayamatinirdeśasūtra* (for which, see above).

(pre-Vijñānavāda) *yogācārin* circles and later gained considerable popularity in both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna.

ADDENDUM (B)

The Four Bases according to the *Mahāvvyutpatti*

The famous 9th century Sanskrit-Tibetan glossary *Mahāvvyutpatti*⁷³ lists the four bases (*catvāri pratisāraṇāni*) of interpretation in an order and wording different from the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* citation of the *Catuḥpratisāraṇasūtra*.⁷⁴ The *Mahāvvyutpatti* is not the only source attesting such textual differences. The *Akṣayamatīnirdeśasūtra* (Braarvrig ed. vol. I, pp. 114–119; tr. vol. II, pp. 440–456), for instance, has the same order and (as far as we can infer from the Tibetan) a fairly similar wording with the *Mahāvvyutpatti*.⁷⁵ On the other hand, the *Dharmasaṃgraha* (Müller and Wenzel ed. 11, § 53 = Skt. and Tib. translation at Gyaltsen Namdol ed. 28–29, § 53) presents us with yet another version, the order of which is: *arthapratisāraṇatā* [...], *jñānapratisāraṇatā* [...], *nītārthapratisāraṇatā* [...], *dharmapratisāraṇatā* [...]. (Also note the differences in wording.)

This suggests that the verse circulated in a more than one version and the differences between them were not necessarily dictated by *yāna*- or scholastic affiliations.

To all intents and purposes (one of them being the polyglot nature of

⁷³ Tucci (1950, 18–19) argues that the compilation of the *Mahāvvyutpatti* began in 814 under King Khri-lde-srong-btsan and was completed during King Ral-pa-can's reign. Traditional Tibetan historians, however, mistakenly attributed the patronage of the glossary compilation to King Ral-pa-can only. Seyfort Ruegg (1992, 389) and Sakaki (1916, Introduction p. II) adopt the approximate date of early 9th century.

⁷⁴ See note 4 above.

⁷⁵ There are, however, some important differences like the use of *dharmatā* instead of *dharma*. See note 1 above.

the text), here I shall quote only the *Mahāvvyutpatti* entry (Sakaki ed. § 74, nos. 1546–1549; pp. 123–124).⁷⁶

Skt. *catvāri pratisāraṇāni*

Tib. *rton pa bzhi'i ming la*

Ch. 四指示名目、四依法 名目

[# 1546] Skt. *arthapratisaraṇena bhavitavyaṃ na vyañjanapratisaraṇena.*

Tib. *don la rton par bya'i | tshig 'bru la rton par mi bya |*

Ch. 依義，不依語。

[# 1547] Skt. *dharmapratisaraṇena bhavitavyaṃ na pudgalapratisaraṇena.*

Tib. *chos la rton par bya'i | gang zag la rton par mi bya |*

Ch. 依法，不依人。

[# 1548] Skt. *jñānapratisaraṇena bhavitavyaṃ na vijñānapratisaraṇena.*

Tib. *ye shes la rton par bya'i | rnams shes la rton par mi bya |*

Ch. 依智，不依識。

[# 1549] Skt. *nītārthasūtrapratisaraṇena bhavitavyaṃ na neyārthasūtrapra-*
tisaraṇena.

Tib. *nges pa'i don gyu mdo sde la rton par bya'i | drang ba'i don*
gyi mdo sde la rton par mi bya ||

Ch. 依了義，不依不了義。

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⁷⁶ The entry in Ishihama's and Fukuda's edition of the *Mahāvvyutpatti* (pp. 85–86, nos. 1549–1552) has the same order and wording as Sakaki's (adding, however, the Mongolian translation and omitting the Chinese equivalents).

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AKBh: *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (Pradhan ed.)

Akṣayamatinirdeśasūtra (Braarvig ed.)

AKVy: *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* (Wogihara ed.)

AN: *Aṅguttaranikāya* (PTS ed.)

BoBh: *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (Dutt ed.; Wogihara ed.)

*Catuhṣratisaraṇasūtra*⁷⁸

Ch.: Chinese

D: Tibetan *Tripiṭaka*, Derge (sDe-dge) ed.

Dharmasaṃgraha (Müller and Wenzel ed.; Gyaltsen Namdol ed.)

DN: *Dīghanikāya* (PTS ed.)

Jhānasutta (in AN IV)

Laṅkāvatārasūtra (Nanjio ed.)

Madhupiṇḍikasutta (in MN I)

Mahāpadesasutta (in AN II; DN II)

Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra (Waldschmidt ed.)

(Mahāyāna) *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (T No. 375, vol. 12)

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⁷⁷ By and large, the references to primary sources follow the regular conventions in Buddhist studies with one major exception: for Indic texts, a notation like 'Pvin 27.9-11' refers to the *Pramāṇavinīścaya*, page 27, lines 9-11. In case of consulting more than one edition, I note the editor's name, e.g. BoBh Dutt ed. 28.2 = *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, Dutt ed., page 28, line 2.

⁷⁸ For versions and editions of the text, see note 23 above.

Manorathapūraṇī [= AN Commentary] (PTS ed.)

MN: *Majjhimanikāya* (PTS ed.)

NB: *Nyāyabindu* (Shcherbatskoī ed.)

NBṬ: *Nyāyabinduṭīkā* (Shcherbatskoī ed.)

Nyāyasūtra (Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Sinha ed.)

P: Tibetan *Tripiṭaka* Peking ed.

Papañcasūdanī [MN Commentary] (PTS ed.)

Prasannapadā (La Vallée Poussin ed.; MacDonald ed.)

PS: *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (Hattori ed.)

PSV: *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti* (Hattori ed.)

PTS: Pali Text Society edition⁷⁹

PVin: *Pramāṇaviniścaya* (Steinkellner ed.)

PV: *Pramāṇavārttikakārikā* (Miyasaka ed.)

Sumaṅgalavilāsinī [= DN Commentary] (PTS ed.)

Skt.: Sanskrit

SNS: *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* (Lamotte ed.)

Śrāvakabhūmi (Deleanu ed.)

T: Chinese *Tripiṭaka* Taishō ed. 大正大藏經⁸⁰

Tib.: Tibetan

ver.: verse (*kārikā*, *śloka*)

Vibh: *Vibhaṅga* (PTS ed.)

⁷⁹ I omit full bibliographical details for the PTS editions.

⁸⁰ Likewise, I omit full bibliographical details for the Taishō edition of the *Tripiṭaka*.

The punctuation of the Chinese texts belongs to me and basically follows the conventions adopted in modern Chinese publications (which are more or less similar to Western punctuation).

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